



# Iztok Bricl

## Director of GR - Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre

Iztok Bricl joined the MICE industry in 2010, when he was appointed director of GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre. Before that, he had excelled in his work in top managerial positions by showing excellent management and organisational skills in companies active in the food processing industry in Slovenia. His main work tasks and competences included organising and managing company business operations, making strategic business decisions, as well as increasing long-term company values. He was responsible for developing and executing strategies for the companies under his management, as well as ensuring these companies operated in accordance with the law. Upon being appointed director of the largest exhibition and convention centre in Slovenia, he successfully initiated the optimisation of financial results and reorganisation of the company's human resources, which numbers 27 people. He has been actively involved in the urban design of the convention centre's surroundings and also acquired new exhibition premises. He expanded the existing calendar of fairs organised by GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre with new fairs, as well as strengthened and updated the congress section. GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre has been a CEFA member since 2011, for which Mr Bricl is mostly credited.

### WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR VENUES IN SLOVENIA FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS?

In Slovenia, Celje organises many fairs, most notably the International Trade and Business Fair – MOS, which takes place every September. Near the Austrian and Hungarian border in the north of Slovenia, the most famous fair is the International Agriculture and Food Fair AGRA, organised by Pomurski Sejem. In the coastal region, Primorski Sejem holds a gastronomy, confectionery and ice cream fair, which is also hosted by Ljubljana and complements the Tourism Fair, organised by hosted by GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre at the end of January. However, the most recognisable destination in the international convention industry is Ljubljana. The GR - Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre is the central exhibition and convention centre and a perfect location for fairs, convention activities, world renowned exhibitions and various other social, cultural and entertainment events. Foreign business and diplomatic representations often organise their events, such as various receptions, presentations or business conferences, in the Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre. We are also building our reputation as a convention centre. In our efforts to develop diverse activities under our trademark, we are actually realising our motivational slogan: Grow with us 365 days a year! We receive more than 400,000 visitors every year.

### WHAT ADVANTAGES DOES SLOVENIA OFFER AS A MICE INDUSTRY DESTINATION?

Slovenia is definitely now one of the most interesting convention destinations, especially because of its boutique offer and "unrecognisability" in the world. International guests love the extraordinary geographical differences, cuisine and hospitality. Slovenia is a small and safe country that offers practically everything: sea, lakes and rivers. More than half of Slovenia is covered with forests, so you can take a beautiful walk through them, and the countryside attracts visitors with its wine routes and highly-developed rural tourism. Spas offer many possibilities for relaxation and pampering, and Slovenia is also an ideal destination for nature enthusiasts, admirers of biodiversity and sports enthusiasts, such as hikers, cyclists, fishermen and extreme sportsmen looking for adventure in water and on land, in lowlands and highlands. At the crossroads of three cultures – Germanic, Romance and Slavic culture – it offers a unique view on the art and tradition of a small European nation. Slovenia wins praise for being savvy about balancing tourism with cultural and historical preservation.

### IS IT COMMON TO PROVIDE A SLOVENIAN CULTURAL AND/OR TOURISM PROGRAMME DURING MOST INTERNATIONAL MICE EVENTS AT GR?

A supporting programme is an integral part of events, especially international conventions. Our aim is to show the specialities and

characteristics of Slovenia to their participants in a charming and attractive manner. They are impressed and they often return as tourists in a private circle. For instance, we organised an afternoon trip for tasters that came to Ljubljana from all over the world in order to judge the wine competition.

We visited the hilly region of Dolenjska, rich with vines. The Krka River flows through the region. In Novo mesto, the centre of the region, we discovered picturesque river banks at river level on a timber raft, accompanied by animators. We tasted Prus wines, who have won the prestigious title of World Champion at the Vino Ljubljana International Wine Competition several times, while ethno music played on an accordion filled the air. We then also visited the oldest vineyard cottage. What is that? Vineyard cottages are a Slovenian speciality and offer unique tourist accommodation. They are facilities on stunning locations in the middle of wine hills. Tourists that book them enjoy an exquisite ambience, and they can discover Slovenia and its rich culinary offer and offer of wines from there. We ended the day at one of the local farms that is included in the European chain "Houses of Tradition", where we were greeted by friendly locals in national costumes from the Dolenjska region. The head of the house invited us to the basement for a glass of Cviček sparkling wine, and during the presentation we tasted local dishes. Tourists do not forget this kind of experience.

### HOW HAS SLOVENIA DEVELOPED AS A TRADE FAIR AND MEETING DESTINATION?

The convention activities of GR as the largest event centre in Slovenia are promoted by the Ljubljana Tourism and the Slovenian Convention Bureau. In addition to Cankarjev Dom, we are the only convention and exhibition centre with an E certificate, awarded by the bureau concerned. As hosts of the Conventa business trade show of the convention industry, we promote the flow of information between providers and buyers in this field for Southeast Europe. Since we are members of the Slovenian Convention Bureau, we participate at two of the most important business trade shows, the EIBTM in Barcelona and the IMEX in Frankfurt, where we present our convention services. GR – Ljubljana Exhibition and Convention Centre is also a member of the ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association), AIPC (International Association of Convention Centres) and the CEFA and UFI international fair alliances.

Cooperation or integration in this area is always useful and enables exchange of experience, information, knowledge, discovering multiculturalism and better mutual understanding. We maintain a presence in the international context and always follow current trends. Networking continually brings new business opportunities.

